

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 EB-07 DLOS-06 SAL-01 OES-06 AID-05

CG-00 DOTE-00 /107 W

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R 010031Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1780

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY SUVA

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 WELLINGTON 2889

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, PFOR, EAID, TN, UR, ANZUS, NZ, AS

SUBJECT: SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM NATIONS AGREE ON JOINT ACTION  
TO COUNTER SOVIET AMBITIONS IN SOUTH PACIFIC

REF: WELLINGTON 2750

SUMMARY: NEW ZEALAND SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN LEAD AT NAURU MEETING OF  
SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM IN LIGHT OF PROSPECTIVE CREATION OF 200 MILE  
ECONOMIC ZONE AND OF SOVIET INITIATIVES IN THIS PART OF PACIFIC.  
ISLAND NATIONS APPEAR INCLINED TOWARDS REGIONAL COOPERATION UNDER  
NEW ZEALAND AUSPICES SO LONG AS THERE IS A REASONABLE PROSPECT OF  
BADLY NEEDED ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE THROUGH THE NEW ZEALAND CONNECTION.  
NEW ZEALAND EXPECTS TO RAISE THIS GENERAL SUBJECT AT THE FORTHCOMING  
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ANZUS COUNCIL MEETING IN CANBERRA. THERE ARE SIGNS THAT USG ASSISTANCE

MAY BE SOUGHT FOR THIS NASCENT REGIONAL GROUPING IN THE CONTEXT OF SOVIET AMBITIONS AND 200-MILE ECONOMIC ZONE.  
END SUMMARY.

1. DCM HAD LONG SESSION JULY 30 WITH DEPUTY SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS MERWYN NORRISH WHO HAD RETURNED ON PREVIOUS DAY FROM NAURU MEETING OF SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM. NEW ZEALAND SIDE AT CONFERENCE HAD BEEN LED BY PRIME MINISTER MULDOON. NORRISH SAID NEW ZEALAND HAD DETECTED NO DISPOSITION ON PART OF CONFEREES (FROM NEW ZEALAND, AUSTRALIA, FIJI, PAPUA NEW GUINEA, WESTERN SAMOA, TONGA, COOK ISLANDS AND NIUE, WITH OBSERVERS FROM THE SOLOMONS, THE GILBERT ISLANDS AND TUVALU) TO LET THE COMMUNIST POWERS INTRUDE INTO THE AREA. GENERAL FEELING WAS THAT REGIONAL CONCERNS SHOULD BE HANDLED ON A REGIONAL BASIS SO LONG AS THIS WOULD BRING HELP TO THE POOREST COUNTRIES IN THE REGION. BUT IN SPITE OF ENCOURAGING INITIAL PROGRESS TOWARD JOINT ACTION, NORRISH SAID NEW ZEALAND HAD ENCOUNTERED A DISTURBING IMPATIENCE ON THE PART OF PRIME MINISTER EFI OF WESTERN SAMOA OVER PAUCITY OF AID FROM WESTERN SAMOA'S TRADITIONAL FRIENDS. EFI WAS OBVIOUSLY TAKEN WITH THE IDEA OF POSSIBLE HELP FROM SOVIET UNION.

2. NORRISH SAID NEW ZEALAND HAD GONE INTO THE FORUM WITH REAL CONCERN ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF SOVIET EFFORTS TO EXPAND ITS FISHING AND OTHER INTERESTS AMONG THE ISLAND NATIONS OF THIS PART OF THE PACIFIC, A SPHERE OF TRADITIONAL NEW ZEALAND INFLUENCE. THE ATTENDANCE OF PRIME MINISTER MULDOON SYMBOLIZED NEW ZEALAND'S CONCERN. NEW ZEALAND FELT CONSIDERABLY BETTER AFTER THE MEETING THAN BEFORE. AT THE SAME TIME, ONE HAD TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE SITUATION WAS FRAGILE. TONGA AND WESTERN SAMOA WERE TWO OF THE MOST UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD. OF THE TWO, THE MOST CRITICAL WAS UNDOUBTEDLY WESTERN SAMOA.

3. TONGAN REPRESENTATIVES AT THE FORUM HAD ASSERTED THAT THERE WAS THUS FAR NO CONCRETE OFFER FROM THE USSR FOR TONGA TO CONSIDER AND TONGA WAS NOT ABOUT TO CONSIDER ANY VAGUE PROPOSALS. SECRETARY OF TONGA GOVERNMENT TAFUI HAD SAID IN NAURU THAT SOVIET MINISTER OF FISHERIES WOULD ATTEND LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE IN NEW YORK NEXT WEEK. IT WAS POSSIBLE SOMETHING  
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MIGHT BE OFFERED TO TONGA AT THAT TIME. HOWEVER, THE TONGAN GOVERNMENT WAS NOT LIKELY TO ACCEPT EVEN THE MOST CONCRETE OFFER BECAUSE OF THE REALIZATION IN NUKU'ALOFA THAT A SOVIET PRESENCE WOULD CONSTITUTE A LONG-TERM DANGER TO THE REGIME.

4. NORRISH WENT ON TO SAY THAT PRIME MINISTER EFI OF WESTERN SAMOA REPRESENTED A NEW MOOD, AS DID PRIME MINISTER SOMARE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA. IN NEW ZEALAND'S VIEW, EFI FELT HIMSELF

OBLIGED TO RESPOND TO THE RISING EXPECTATIONS OF HIS POVERTY STRICKEN PEOPLE. EFI HAD DONE THE UNHEARD OF THING IN TERMS OF SOUTH PACIFIC ETIQUETTE BY GETTING INTO A SPIRITED ARGUMENT WITH PRIME MINISTER RATU MARA OF FIJI OVER THE SOVIET ROLE IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC. BUT EFI LATER COOLED DOWN AND APPOLOGIZED TO RATU MARA. BY THE END OF THE FORUM EFI CAME AROUND TO AGREEING THAT WESTERN SAMOA MIGHT BE ABLE TO PROFIT FROM REGIONAL COOPERATION.

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5. NORRISH WAS VERY PLEASED THAT THE CONFEREES HAD AGREED TO SUPPORT THE NEW ZEALAND-DRAFTED "DECLARATION OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM" (REPORTED SEPTEL), AFFIRMING THEIR INTENTION TO WORK TOGETHER CLOSELY AT THE LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE IN NEW YORK. THE DECLARATION ENVISAGED THAT ALL SIGNATORY COUNTRIES WOULD BENEFIT FROM CREATION OF A 200 MILE ECONOMIC ZONE. THE PARTIES WOULD WORK TOGETHER ON A REGIONAL BASIS AND SEEK TO

AVOID DECISIONS WHICH, VNQCAUSE OF LACK OF CONSULTATION OR COORDINATION, MIGHT BENEFIT ONE OR MORE MEMBERS AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHERS AND OF THE REGION AS A WHOLE. FINALLY, THE DECLARATION AGREED THAT MEMBER COUNTRIES WILL MEET SHORTLY AT A GOVERNMENT LEVEL TO WEIGH THE SITUATION IN LIGHT OF THE LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE. PRIME MINISTER MULDOON HAD STRONGLY SUPPORTED THE IDEA OF ANOTHER CONFERENCE OF FORUM MEMBERS WHICH IS TO TAKE PLACE IN SUVA NEXT OCTOBER. THE PRIME MINISTER HIMSELF  
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WILL ATTEND AND HAS QUIETLY AGREED TO HELP FINANCE THE ATTEND-  
DANCE OF OTHERS.

6. NORRISH REFERRED TO THE VISIT TO WELLINGTON OF A SOVIET FISHING DELEGATION WHILE PRIME MINISTER MULDOON HAD BEEN AWAY AT THE SOOUTH PACIFIC FORUM. ACTING PRIME MINISTER BRIAN TALBOYS HAD AGAIN TURNED DOWN PRESISITENT SOVIET EFFORTS TO ATTAIN NEW ZEALAND PORT FACILITIES FOR RUSSIAN FISHING FLEET AND A CHANGE-OVER POINT FROM WHICH FISHING CREWS COULD BE FLOWN TO AND FROM THE SOVIET UNION. NEW ZEALAND HAD FIRST TURNED DOWN A SIMILAR SOVIET APPROACH A FEW MONTHS AGO.

7. NORRISH CONCLUDED ON THE NOTE THAT WHILE NEW ZEALAND HAS TAKEN THE LEAD IN THIS AREA, HELP FROM THE UNITED STATES WOULD PROBABLY BE NEEDED. DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER TALBOYS WOULD BRING THIS UP FOR DISCUSSION AT THE ANZUS CONFERENCE IN CANBERRA. AIR AND SEA SURVEILLANCE SEEMED THE OBVIOUS WAY IN WHICH THE UNITED STATES WOULD HELP, ASSUMING THE 200 MILE ECONOMIC ZONE EVENTUATES. THE FORUM NATIONS HAD ALSO AGREED TO ESTABLISH A SHIPPING LINE TO BE CALLED THE SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM LINE. U.S. ASSISTANCE TO THIS MIGHT ALSO BE SOUGHT. NEW ZEALAND HOPED THAT WHATEVER ASSISTANCE THE UNITED STATES EVENTUALLY FOUND ITSELF ABLE TO PROVIDE WOULD BE GIVEN IN A FORUM CONTEXT RATHER THAN BILATERALLY. BILATERAL U.S. ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUAL FORUM COUNTRIES MIGHT PROVOKE BILATERAL ATTEMPTS FROM THE SOVIET UNION.

8. COMMENT: THE PROBLEM OF 200 MILE ECONOMIC ZONES AND SOVIET AMBITIONS VIS-A-VIS THE SMALL ISLAND NATIONS OF THIS AREA OF THE PACIFIC IS BEGINNING TO ASSUME SOME SHAPE. THE LEAD THAT NEW ZEALAND HAS TAKEN IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES IS WELCOME. THE NEW ZEALAND SUGGESTION THAT THE UNITED STATES MAY BE CALLED UPON TO HELP THE SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM GROUPING REFLECTS IN PART THE DIFFICULT ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES NEW ZEALAND NOW FACES. IT ALSO REFLECTS A REALISTIC RECOGNITION THAT MORE AID WILL HAVE TO BE FORTHCOMING TO THE VERY POOR NATIONS OF WESTERN SAMOA AND TONGA FROM THEIR TRADITIONAL FRIENDS. THE ANZUS COUNCIL MEETING IN CANBERRA SHOULD PROVIDE A TIMELY FORUM FOR LOOKING AT THESE PROBLEMS. END  
OF COMMENT.

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## Message Attributes

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